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Fiftieth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 9 February 1994, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Van WULFFTEN PALTHE (Netherlands)

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an adequate standard of living; foreign debt, economic adjustment policies and their effects on the full enjoyment of human rights and, in particular, on the implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Development:

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

QUESTION OF THE REALIZATION IN ALL COUNTRIES OF THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS CONTAINED IN THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND IN THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, AND STUDY OF SPECIAL PROBLEMS WHICH THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FACE IN THEIR EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THESE HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUDING: PROBLEMS RELATED TO THE RIGHT TO ENJOY AN ADEQUATE STANDARD OF LIVING; FOREIGN DEBT, ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT POLICIES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON THE FULL ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND, IN PARTICULAR, ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT (agenda item 7) (continued)

(a) POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN ITS VARIOUS FORMS AS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN DEVELOPMENT AND IN THE FULL REALIZATION OF ALL HUMAN RIGHTS

(E/CN.4/1994/17, E/CN.4/1994/18*, E/CN.4/1994/19 and Add.1, E/CN.4/1994/20; E/CN.4/1994/NGO/6, E/CN.4/1993/16; A/CONF.157/PC/73)

QUESTION OF THE REALIZATION OF THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT (agenda item 8) (continued) (E.CN.4/1994/21 and Corr.1 and 2, E/CN.4/1994/99*)

STATUS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS (agenda item 15) (continued) (E/CN.4/1994/67, E/CN.4/1994/68; E/C.12/1993/3; CCPR/C/2/Rev.3)

EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING OF BODIES ESTABLISHED PURSUANT TO UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS (agenda item 16) (continued) (A/CONF.157/PC/62/Add.11/Rev.1; A/CONF.157/TBB/4 and Add.1)

1. Mr. MURZI (Venezuela) referred to the dismal social and political situation in the world: the general lack of respect for human rights and freedoms, the many international and internal conflicts, the contempt shown for the right to life, the use of torture and degrading treatment, the frequent absence of the rule of law, the purely formal character of political, social and economic guarantees in many countries and the massacres in the Balkans. Even if reference to those factors had become a commonplace, the Commission had to focus its attention on them at each of its sessions.

2. The social, economic and institutional crisis being experienced by a very large number of developing countries called for an in-depth study of the right to development. It was well known that poverty and underdevelopment were a fertile environment for all manner of autocratic regimes and that, in many countries, a weak index of growth, gross domestic product or industrial production was virtually concomitant with a denial of human rights and freedom. That situation was mainly due to a single-product industry, dependence on exports of raw materials, the significant share of government revenue derived from petroleum and petroleum products or unfavourable economic and trade agreements concluded with the great powers under the aegis of world financial institutions. This dependency was propitious, not so much to democracy, as to dictatorship and harsh regimes, which prospered in countries where there was ignorance, illiteracy and a lack of a skilled work force, where oppression reigned, and the people were denied the right to join trade unions or participate in the civil, political or cultural life of the nation.

3. The Secretary-General's report (E/CN.4/1994/17) painted a rather discouraging picture of the situation in developing countries, especially those which were heavily in debt, unable to stabilize their economy and faced with an alarming increase in extreme poverty with the considerable social cost it entailed. While Governments were responsible for setting development priorities, taking account of their social costs, these countries had to feel that they were supported by international cooperation and the international financial institutions.

4. Quoting the example of his own country which, through its own fault, had allowed democracy to deteriorate and had ended up by becoming a very rich country with a very poor population, he said that political determination, social justice, the legal system and the participation of citizens in society could help to ensure a return to the road to development. He approved the Working Group's recommendation that the right to development be placed on the agenda of forthcoming United Nations conferences, especially that of the International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit for Social Development. He also fully approved the Group's work programme and requested the secretariat to do everything possible to ensure that the Group could meet twice in 1994.

5. Mr. KESSEL (Canada), speaking under agenda item 16, said that, in the 45 years which had elapsed since the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the international community had created a human rights treaty system which constituted a cornerstone of all international human rights endeavours. That system consisted of seven monitoring bodies each of which sought to maintain its own identity, although they had intertwining functions.

6. Because of its interest in fostering the healthy growth of this system, the Commission had requested the independent expert, Professor Alston, to prepare an updated report on possible long-term approaches to enhancing the operation of the treaty bodies (A/CONF.157/PC/62/Add.11/Rev.1). It was on that report he wished to comment. If the system was to operate effectively, it was crucial that the most important instruments be ratified by all States, which was not at present the case. The World Conference on Human Rights had recommended that the Secretary-General open a dialogue with States to that end and a draft plan of action had been submitted to the Secretary-General.

7. The longest standing set of problems related to the increasing disparity between the number of reports that States were obliged to submit and the number they actually submitted. With the backlog of overdue reports numbering over 1,000, the credibility of the whole system was likely to be undermined. Admittedly, it was not an easy task for many Governments, but some were clearly lacking in political will. The Commission had to find at least the beginning of a solution at the present session. The chairpersons of the bodies set up under the international human rights instruments had proposed that the examination of delinquent States could be held, even in the absence of their reports and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had proposed that some of its members visit countries which had fallen a long way behind. Mr. Alston had suggested that delinquent States could be listed by name in resolutions adopted by Charter-based organs. Perhaps consideration could also be given to providing advisory services for States which were late in reporting owing to inadequate experience.

8. Reporting was sometimes a heavy burden because of the overlapping competences of different treaty bodies, which obliged some States to deal with the same issue in different reports. The solutions proposed by the chairpersons of these bodies consisted in reducing the number of bodies and reports, encouraging States to produce a single global report to be submitted to all the relevant bodies and in replacing comprehensive periodic reports with specifically tailored reports. While such fundamental reform clearly warranted thorough discussion, he echoed Professor Alston's warning that care would have to be taken to preserve the integrity of the system and especially its ability to safeguard human rights and not to sacrifice it to illusory notions of streamlining and efficiency.

9. The system was also suffering because the work of treaty bodies and their conclusions were inadequately publicized. States parties themselves had a role to play by informing the public about the way in which individuals could pursue their cases after they had exhausted all domestic remedies, while treaty bodies needed to pay more attention to their relations with the public and the media. There were many other shortcomings including inadequate follow-up on the observations and final comments of the treaty bodies on the periodical reports, inadequate secretariat servicing because of a lack of resources, insufficient ratification of individual complaints procedures under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture and, lastly, failure by States parties to nominate and elect truly independent experts to the treaty bodies. The delegation of Canada would be submitting a draft resolution under item 8, in which it would attempt to propose constructive solutions, in cooperation with all the delegations concerned.

10. Mr. BROTODININGRAT (Indonesia) welcomed the fact that, since the Declaration on the Right to Development had been adopted in Vienna in June 1993, that right had been recognized and the time of sterile debate on the issue was now over. The terms of the Declaration itself indicated the path to be followed: furthering of development to promote human rights, international cooperation to eliminate obstacles to development and the establishment of equitable economic relations and a favourable international economic environment.

11. The way forward was clear but it would be a long haul, as more than one fifth of humanity was still living in poverty and many developing countries which had carried out the prescribed structural adjustment or taken the requisite measures to allow the free play of market forces saw their efforts thwarted by a hostile economic environment characterized by inadequate access to technology, protectionism, low commodity prices, a crushing debt burden and the neutralization of any possible comparative advantage. In these circumstances, the right to development could be realized only by a strenuous effort within the Commission and elsewhere. Outside the Commission it was up to the developing countries themselves to adopt effective development policies, while the developed countries should do their utmost to abstain from policies which had an adverse impact on the international economic environment. Both sides should cooperate in order to establish the new partnership for development defined in Cartagena and implement the agenda for

development. They should also seek to take full advantage of the International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit for Social Development.

12. The Commission and the High Commissioner for Human Rights should maintain a balance in their work on civil and political rights and their treatment of economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development. The Commission should also seek to ensure a linking of human rights and development issues. The Centre for Human Rights would have to improve its capacity in the field of development.

13. The mandate of the Working Group on the Right to Development was to formulate comprehensive and effective measures to eliminate obstacles to the implementation and realization of the Declaration on the Right to Development and to recommend ways and means of enabling that right to be realized in all States. He took note of the Working Group's preliminary recommendations and suggested that, in the future, more attention should be devoted to the requisite international cooperation. Lastly, he hoped that his delegation's draft resolution, together with those of other developing countries on the issue, would command the full support of all the members of the Commission.

14. Mr. LEMINE (Mauritania) said that there were numerous obstacles to the realization of human rights in many developing countries, where illiteracy, disease, extreme poverty and social exclusion were affecting larger and larger sections of the population. Hundreds of millions of human beings who were overwhelmed by social and economic hardship were thus deprived of all the rights to which they were officially entitled. It was primarily up to every State to create the necessary conditions to enable its citizens to exercise those rights. However, the international community also had to shoulder its responsibilities in the matter by fostering an international climate favourable to comprehensive, harmonious, universal and sustainable development.

15. Development constituted the sine qua non of human rights and, in the final analysis, the struggle for development was a struggle for human rights. The World Conference in Vienna had reaffirmed that the right to development was a universal, inalienable right which was one of the fundamental human rights. It was therefore essential to take both national and international action to find appropriate means of surmounting the barriers to the realization of the right to development and therefore the achievement and exercise of all other human rights. At the national level, popular participation in the political, economic, cultural and social fields should be encouraged and development plans should be formulated and carried out in cooperation with the population and should meet its essential needs. At the international level, the existing economic system had to be changed, as its salient features - protectionism, the deterioration of the terms of trade and the crushing burden of servicing foreign debt - were the main obstacles to the social and economic development of many countries. Countries which had applied structural adjustment programmes in cooperation with international financial institutions had discovered that those obstacles could be removed only through the establishment of genuine international cooperation which took the interests of all human beings into account. Economic conditions were ripe for promoting a new world partnership to end the worsening of social and

economic conditions that was being experienced throughout the world by most people who were losing their civic mindedness and their trust in institutions that were incapable of meeting their needs.

16. No one could remain unconcerned by that situation, which not only was an affront to human dignity, but was a potential danger for all. It was illusory to believe that poverty would remain confined to certain regions. National selfishness had to be overcome and international solidarity should be strengthened in order to lay the foundations of a free, just, peaceful world, as envisaged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, one from which the dread of poverty had been banished.

17. Mr. KHALILUR RAHMAN (Bangladesh) commended the efforts being made within the United Nations system to identify the various components of human rights and the progress that had been achieved in that sphere. The first instruments developed by the United Nations had placed greater stress on fundamental freedoms than on economic and social rights. The Declaration on the Right to Development had not been adopted until 1986. For all that, the right to development was an inalienable right and one of the fundamental human rights. It should be borne in mind that underdevelopment was a major impediment to the effective enjoyment of all such rights.

18. In the Vienna Declaration, the World Conference on Human Rights had therefore reaffirmed that the right to development, as set forth in the Declaration on the Right to Development, was a universal, inalienable right that formed an integral part of fundamental human rights. It also stated that the human person was the central subject of development. The authorities in Bangladesh had set priorities to ensure the well-being of human beings. In endeavouring to improve the economic situation of the country, they were seeking in particular to alleviate the plight of the more disadvantaged and vulnerable sections of the population. The aim of the "Dhal Bhat" programme launched by the Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, was to ensure basic nutrition for the poor and deprived. Primary health care was being expanded in order to achieve the goal of "health for all" by the turn of the century. Seventy per cent of children had already been vaccinated against six serious diseases under the Expanded Programme on Immunization. A programme had been launched to ensure that all children received primary education and particular attention was being given to the integration of women in the development process.

19. There were grounds for hoping that, with the improvement of economic and social conditions, the people of Bangladesh would effectively be able to enjoy all the various facets of human rights. The unfavourable international macroeconomic environment, reflected in the widening gap between north and south and between rich and poor, was one of the worst obstacles to realization of the right to development. The least-developed countries were those which suffered most from the overall macroeconomic structure. The macroeconomic indicators of Bangladesh had improved under the present democratic Government. Nevertheless, the country was encountering enormous difficulties and the international community should support its efforts by relaxing the terms on which aid was granted and by offering preferential terms of trade and easier access to foreign markets.

20. The delegation of Bangladesh had carefully studied the report of the Working Group on the Right to Development. It supported the recommendation that additional information be sought from Governments, international institutions, regional economic commissions, the Commission on Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women and that the Secretary-General be requested to provide the Centre for Human Rights with a unit which would be specially responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Declaration and giving logistic support to the Working Group.

21. At its latest session, the United Nations General Assembly had decided to create a post of High Commissioner for Human Rights. Given the close link between human rights and development, the High Commissioner should give priority to implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Development. Furthermore, the right to development should be placed on the agenda of forthcoming United Nations meetings, including those dealing with population and development, the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Commission on Sustainable Development. While it was the responsibility of each State to define its own development strategy, the international community ought to create a social and economic environment that was favourable to the realization of the right to development in the interest of all.

22. Mr. DON NANJIRA (Kenya) regretted that the issue of the right to development had been neglected in the past and that for too long the emphasis in human rights had been on civil and political rights at the expense of economic, social and cultural rights. The 1948 Declaration of Human Rights and the Proclamation of Teheran of 1968 had not restored the balance, nor had the increase in the number of bodies concerned with human rights after 1948 and 1968 improved the situation. On the contrary, as the international community had become more aware of human rights values, new demands for individual rights had emerged.

23. Developing countries had begun to challenge the usual, narrow concept of human rights. They had gradually become convinced that human rights were not only civil and political rights, but also included freedom of religion, the right to health, the right to enough food and the right to development. Since 1988, the year of the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which had ushered in a new era in east-west relations, new economic, social and cultural challenges had arisen. Many organizations and individuals sympathetic to the cause of the developing countries had stressed the need to strike a balance between the exercise of civil and political rights and the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

24. The Vienna Conference in June 1993 had marked a turning point in the quest for a balanced treatment of the various categories of rights. The Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the Conference recognized that the right to development was a human right (paras. 66 to 77). The Conference had also taken note of achievements in that sphere between 1987 and 1993, which had lent a new dimension to human rights. In that context, in its resolution 1993/22, the Commission had set up the Working Group on the Right to Development. That Group, of which he had the honour to be a member, had held its first session in Geneva from 8 to 19 November 1993. The conclusions and recommendations contained in its report (E/CN.4/1994/21) reflected the

personal views of the experts and not those of their Governments. This report was intended as an independent, impartial analysis of the right to development and did not praise or criticize Governments. In order to proceed with its huge task, the Working Party would have to define precise subjects for discussion and have the requisite resources to carry out its mandate effectively. It would be advisable for it to hold regional meetings in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean region. A regional meeting ought to be planned and held in the course of the year, which in essence meant that the Group would hold three sessions in 1994. In that connection, it would be necessary to ensure that the dates of those sessions did not clash with those of meetings or conferences of other United Nations bodies.

25. There were many obstacles to the realization of the right to development. They included all forms of racism and racial discrimination, colonialism and neo-colonialism, foreign occupation, infringements of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, the arms race, refusal or denial of peoples' rights to self-determination, the burden of debt, environmental damage, unjust financial and trading arrangements among nations, protectionism, poverty, the lack of democracy, macroeconomic problems caused by the rigours of structural adjustment, inadequate popular participation in the development process, disregard of the situation of the most vulnerable groups in society and illiteracy.

26. The Kenyan delegation called on the Commission to formulate measures to secure the implementation of the Working Group's recommendations. It also hoped that the Centre for Human Rights would give the Centre greater assistance so as to guarantee that the Commission's resolutions and decisions were effectively applied.

27. Mr. SLIPCHENKO (Observer for Ukraine) welcomed the fact that the Vienna Conference had ended the artificial distinction made between civil and political rights on the one hand and economic, social and cultural rights on the other. He also welcomed its recognition that democracy, development and respect for human rights were interdependent. The significance of those views of the Conference were well understood by Ukraine, which was going through the painful transition from a totalitarian regime with a centralized economy to a democratic society oriented towards a market economy.

28. In Ukraine, far-reaching economic changes were being accompanied by an industrial recession, galloping inflation and a serious deterioration in the living standards of the vast majority of the population. Social tensions were emerging which could potentially call the reforms into question and even lead to nostalgia for a touch of authoritarianism. The countries of central and eastern Europe could gauge the threats which a worsening of the economic situation entailed for individual rights and fundamental freedoms. Ukraine was also suffering from the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster and losses resulting from the United Nations sanctions against the former Yugoslavia.

29. To contend with these huge difficulties, the Ukrainian authorities were endeavouring to set up a social security net which would not, however, create a dependence mentality among the beneficiaries. While guaranteeing

satisfactory conditions of employment (minimum wage, inflation-indexed minimum income, etc.), the State was targeting its assistance to the most vulnerable sections of the population.

30. The countries of central and eastern Europe were also suffering from the burden of foreign debt. The difficulties facing developing countries and countries in economic transition were clearly reflected in the report prepared by the Secretary-General in pursuance of Commission resolution 1993/12 on the effects on the full enjoyment of human rights of the economic adjustment policies arising from foreign debt and, in particular, on the implementation of the Declaration of the Right to Development (E/CN.4/1994/19). Nevertheless, no matter how great economic hardships were, they should under no circumstances be used as justification for the infringement of fundamental human rights and freedoms. Its history and experience had made Ukraine firmly convinced of this.

31. Democracy, development and human rights could not take root without concerted efforts and cooperation between States and international bodies. The international community had a duty to help countries which had embarked on the arduous path towards a system in which human rights were respected. The Ukrainian delegation therefore shared the concern expressed by the representative of the Russian Federation regarding the situation in the territory of the former USSR. However, it could not endorse that position if it presupposed a unilateral assumption of an exclusive monitoring role by any specific country.

32. Ukraine attached the greatest importance to international cooperation in the field of human rights, including matters pertaining to social development. It supported the recommendations of the Working Group on the Right to Development. Coordination among all the organs of the United Nations system, and not only those concerned with human rights, undeniably had to be improved. Aid from United Nations bodies to the countries in transition in central and eastern Europe would undoubtedly alleviate the pain they were suffering on account of their political and economic transformation and would therefore help to ensure that the citizens of those countries had full enjoyment of their rights and freedoms.

33. Mr. BISLEY (Observer for New Zealand), speaking under agenda item 16, said that the World Conference on Human Rights had recommended further work to improve "the functioning, including the monitoring tasks, of the treaty bodies". The interim report on the subject prepared by the independent expert, Professor Philip Alston (A/CONF.157/PC/62/Add.11/Rev.1) was a significant contribution to this work, which the New Zealand delegation warmly welcomed. As advocated by the Vienna Conference, it was first necessary to encourage the universal ratification of all international human rights instruments by the year 2000 and, to that end, to step up assistance to Governments, especially those of the developing countries, for which accession to those instruments presented real difficulties. He pointed out, however, that achievement of the objective of universal ratification would bring a considerable increase in the workload of the monitoring bodies, which would inevitably lead to further delays in the consideration of the periodic reports. The brunt of that situation would naturally be borne by the Centre

for Human Rights. It was therefore essential to increase its resources and to make a greater effort to meet the needs for competent staff, data and documentation of all the bodies concerned.

34. While the submission of periodic reports was essential if the monitoring system was to function properly, it could prove to be a heavy burden on States parties, especially on smaller developing countries which often had difficulty in meeting their reporting obligations. The New Zealand delegation therefore hoped that the Centre for Human Rights would grant the requests for assistance which it had received from countries in the Asia-Pacific region. It supported Professor Alston's proposal for a more concerted system of cross-referencing of information submitted in national reports and thought that States should designate a separate administrative unit to coordinate reports to all treaty bodies. In New Zealand, that was the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. For the sake of greater transparency and simplicity, all bodies should adopt uniform practices and terminology.

35. With regard to delays in reporting, the need to provide the requisite technical assistance and advice to States parties which had failed to report could not be overemphasized. The practice adopted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which consisted in examining the situation in States parties which had never submitted a report or whose reports were long overdue, could be usefully copied by other committees. Among the long-term approaches proposed by Professor Alston to improve the functioning of treaty bodies, the New Zealand delegation noted one idea which warranted further discussion, namely the possibility of States parties submitting a single report which could then be supplemented with information on particular questions raised by the body in question, or the possibility of replacing detailed comprehensive reports with reports on specific items. His delegation was awaiting with interest the submission of the independent expert's final report. It was fully prepared to cooperate with other delegations in seeking effective ways of improving the working of the existing system.

36. Mr. NOWAK (Austria) said that the two 1966 Covenants and the Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights constituted the core of the United Nations system for the protection of human rights. Despite the urging of the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the total number of States parties to those two instruments still amounted to no more than two thirds of the States Members of the United Nations. In view of this low level of ratification, it was questionable whether States really took seriously the minimum human rights standards laid down in those instruments.

37. The World Conference had also recommended that States parties to human rights instruments should consider acceptance of all the existing procedures for the submission and examination of communications. As of 1 December 1993 only 74 States had been parties to the first Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and only 43 States had made the declaration provided for in article 41 of the Covenant. Nevertheless, the procedures for examining communications from individuals or from States constituted a good means of verifying whether, in certain specific cases, a State was complying with its international treaty obligations. The Committee for Human Rights had evidence that that procedure not only provided victims of human rights

violations with an effective remedy, but that it also encouraged Governments to change laws or practices deemed not to be in conformity with international standards. It was for that reason that the World Conference had encouraged the Commission to continue the consideration of optional protocols to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Austrian delegation attached the greatest importance to that point, given that the interdependence and indivisibility of all human rights had been constantly reaffirmed by the United Nations. There was therefore no reason why implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by the States parties to that instrument should not be monitored by means of a procedure involving the examination of complaints submitted by other States or by individuals. Professor Danilo Türk's report on the realization of economic, social and cultural rights (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1992/16) and the report of the seminar on appropriate indicators to measure achievements in the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights (A/CONF.157/PC/73) contained valuable information that would help the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to take decisions on communications alleging violations of those rights. The Commission should therefore accede to the World Conference's request.

38. Despite all the suggestions made by experts and various bodies, there was still a great deal of overlapping among the various treaty bodies, which could be avoided by better coordination. The Austrian delegation considered that the chairpersons of all those bodies should hold annual rather than biannual meetings and that the special rapporteurs and other supervisory organs established by the Commission should be invited to attend. The conclusions reached by the various bodies after they had examined a State's report should be published in the country concerned, so that all non-governmental human rights organizations, especially those at the local level, could participate more actively in the monitoring system. A computerized database covering all the information gleaned from the pertinent reports of governments or intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations on the real human rights situation in all countries should also be set up at the Centre for Human Rights, as only transparency would enable the international community to respond effectively to human rights violations, on the basis of objectivity and non-selectivity.

39. The Austrian delegation again called the Commission's attention to the need for more fundamental long-term changes in the treaty monitoring system. The States parties to the six main human rights instruments, namely the two Covenants, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention Against Torture and the Convention on the Rights of the Child should combine their various periodical reports in a single global report which could be supplemented, if necessary, by further reports on specific issues. Furthermore, the Commission should consider the possibility of drafting protocols additional to those six basic instruments and of setting up one expert body responsible for examining the global periodic reports.

40. Mr. ROMAZZOTTI (International Movement ATD Fourth World) welcomed the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Those texts supported the Commission's view that extreme poverty was a violation of human

dignity and that urgent measures should be adopted to eradicate it. They also emphasized the need to foster participation by the poorest people in the decision-making process in their communities, the promotion of human rights and efforts to combat extreme poverty. It was indeed essential that the most indigent should be able to participate in work concerning extreme poverty. They were rarely consulted and yet they were entitled to pass on their experience to the world and needed to feel that they were useful to the society in which they lived. That was one of the main concerns of the study which the Special Rapporteur on human rights and extreme poverty had been asked to undertake. In his preliminary report (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1993/16), the Special Rapporteur had placed emphasis on the gathering of information that was needed for such a study. The poorest wished to contribute to that exercise. They hoped that their daily defiance of poverty would be recognized as such. Begging as a means of resisting poverty and endeavouring to make it less harsh on one's nearest and dearest, although often regarded as an act of resignation, was simply a desperate attempt to save what still could be saved. How could such behaviour be understood without a deep understanding of those living in extreme poverty?

41. The International Movement ATD Fourth World, founded by Fr. Wresinski, and other organizations working with the very poor had come to recognize several facts. For fieldworkers, long-term commitment, trust, action and partnership with the people concerned were vital in order to perceive the true meaning of extreme poverty and understand those who were enduring it. After working alongside the most indigent for more than 35 years, the International Movement ATD Fourth World had agreed to contribute actively to the study on human rights and extreme poverty requested by the Commission. It was also because of this partnership that the movement could promise that very poor persons would take part in the proposed seminar on extreme poverty and denial of human rights, as the Commission had planned. Such a seminar would offer a unique opportunity for the poorest to share directly in the work of the United Nations and would thus fulfil the wishes expressed in the Vienna Declaration that the poorest should participate in the promotion of human rights. The seminar should be held at a date around 17 October which, since 1992, had been International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Furthermore, such a seminar held a few months before the World Summit for Social Development would enrich the Summit's debates on poverty by highlighting a different approach based on the experience of the poorest people.

42. Mrs. FAUCHERE (World Confederation of Labour) observed that recent economic, social and political developments were leading to an increasing polarization of society throughout the world. Power and wealth were being concentrated in the hands of a minority while the number of poor people and persons living on the margins of society was growing. In the absence of international regulations on capital movements and hence investments, an enormous gulf in social and working conditions had formed between regions and, particularly, between continents, which was likely to lead to countries and regions competing frantically in order to attract money to their territory. To that end, they would deregulate still further, whittle away existing collective bargaining practices and reduce the powers of trade unions themselves. Work, and therefore workers, had again become a commodity, a raw material, as they had been in the previous century. Economic decisions were dictated by the few and did not rest on a really democratic approach or method

of choice. The IMF's structural adjustment programmes and the advice of the World Bank, organizations where the richest countries heavily influenced decisions, clearly illustrated that fact. The structural adjustments imposed on third world countries were leading to the extreme destitution of the most deprived sections of the population, while shoring up the wealth and privileges of a few people in the élite. In the industrialized countries, the enormous sums thus transferred from south to north were of no benefit whatsoever to the general population, because they were also seized by a few people for whom banks and transnational firms acted as intermediaries. Practices that were developing, such as the enslaving of human beings through prostitution or forced labour, the trafficking of children through adoption networks and the sale of organs, were, like drug-taking, symptoms of imbalances caused by the economic, social and ethical havoc wreaked by the globalization of society.

43. Many countries had been prevailed upon by international financial institutions, creditors and some major development aid agencies to adopt various kinds of neoliberal measures. Privatization was just one facet of that approach. One of its inherent characteristics was that, by selling off national assets cheaply, the governments concerned were establishing a new form of colonization. In its present form, the globalization of the economy and the new dominance of transnational corporations constituted a threat to development, democracy and peace. That was the reason why the World Confederation of Labour rejected any trade practice involving social dumping of any kind whatsoever and it hoped that a social clause would be inserted in trade and cooperation agreements. Such a clause should incorporate the provisions of the international labour conventions on trade-union freedom, the right to collective bargaining and the ban on discrimination and forced labour, especially child labour. The Congress of the World Confederation of Labour called on international bodies and organizations to make provision for the partial conversion of debt into the financing of economic or social projects to help the population, the partial reduction or definitive cancelling of the debts of the poorest countries, as well as the adoption of coercive measures against leaders or former leaders alleged to have misappropriated a part of aid and loans for their personal benefit or for the benefit of persons or entities directly or indirectly connected with their interests. The World Confederation of Labour urged compliance with the recommendation which the United Nations had made to the wealthy countries in 1972 to devote at least 0.7 per cent of their GDP to the development of countries of the third world.

44. Mr. FAVRE (International Federation of Rural Adult Catholic Movements, FIMARC) said that he wished to contribute to the Commission's deliberations by denouncing the obstacles to the implementation of the right to development and by describing some rural development schemes. FIMARC, which acted as spokesman for rural movements in some 40 countries, attested to the general condemnation of the ascendency of a liberalism that was breeding exclusion by unjustly dividing society into a minority of haves and an ever-increasing majority of have-nots. The latter included people in rural areas who had been deprived of land, abandoned by their government, pushed to the fringe of society, doomed to unemployment with no insurance benefits or forced to emigrate. Even when the right to land was realised, country people were still cheated out of their dignity as responsible men and women, because

they felt remote from decision-making centres. In reality, development was forced on them from outside by the large purchasing and distribution cooperatives, the agro-industry enterprises, structural debt adjustments and unrealistic Government regulations. All those obstacles and humiliations explained their sometimes violent reactions.

45. The number of independent farms and small businesses was growing in Europe. In Central America, at a seminar of rural movements, country people had vowed that they would take charge of their own development. In Asia, the rural population, who were aware of the need to safeguard the environment, were setting up organizations to defend it, albeit with very modest resources. In Africa, development was generally seen in terms of rural families and the leading role played by women. Networks of country women were being organized in South America.

46. The International Federation of Rural Adult Catholic Movements, together with all those whose cause it was pleading to the Commission, firmly hoped that the International Year of the Family launched by the United Nations would permit progress on the path which had at last been cleared to sustainable, but above all caring, development.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.